

ARANYA

Hyderabad Birding Pals | Friends of Flora & Fauna



Harriers of India

In this issue

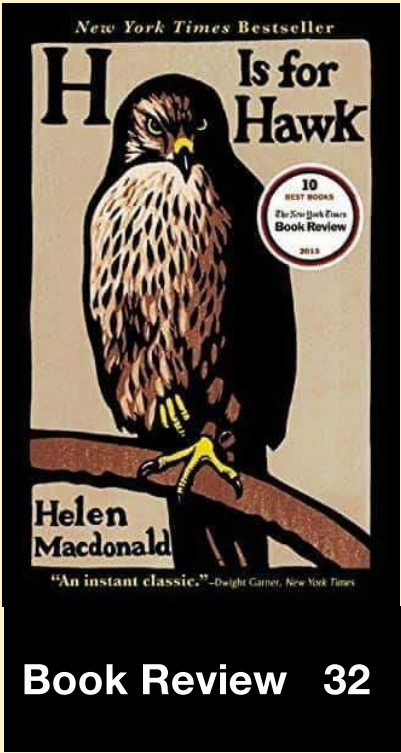
This month we conducted four bird walks, the walk at ICRISAT saw the highest number of members attending. With the onset of winter, spotting Harriers near wetlands and grasslands is frequent. Our cover story explores these beautiful birds of prey. We often capture hundreds of photographs, in order to help you manage them better, we have an article on maintaining a cloud backup of your precious images. This month, another expert photographer reveals what he has in his camera bag. Two books are reviewed in the book reviews section followed by important sightings and the photographer's corner.

- Ajinkya Supekar

ARANYA

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HBP Bird Walks in November



176th Bird Walk | ICRISAT

5st November 2017



177th Bird Walk | Narsapur Forest

12th November 2017



178th Bird Walk | Ananthagiri Forest

19th November 2017



179th Bird Walk | Manjeera Dam

26th November 2017

ICRISAT Trip Report

By Ajinkya Supekar

176th Bird Walk at ICRISAT
Sunday, 5th November 2017

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) is international non-profit organization that undertakes scientific research for development in agriculture, headquartered in Patancheru, Hyderabad, Telangana. It is spread in a whopping 3400 acres containing majorly cultivated fields, few water bodies, wooded patches, scrubland and a castle, yes one from the past. Due to less disturbance and diversity of habitat, many diverse species of birds flock here. Winter is especially a great time for bird watchers to have an excellent birding session. Prior permission needs to be taken to enter the campus. More about guidelines to follow in the campus at the end.



Hyderabad Birding Pals organised its 176th bird walk here on Sunday 5th November 2017. Thirty members participated in the bird walk. Members were joined by eminent birders, Dr. Thomas Falk and Mr. Mulagala Srinivas. Cold was less than expected, lots of sunshine.

Everyone gathered at the main gate of ICRISAT, the list of participants were handed over to the security guards and one by one car entered the campus.

At the lake near the administrative building, we took the group photograph. As Dr. Falk worked in the same institute, he briefed us about do's and don'ts to be followed in the campus. After this, birding started with everyone taking their vehicles around.



Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*
By Mulagala Srinivas

While we were listening to Dr. Falk, he pointed us to the two Oriental Honey-buzzards *Pernis ptilorhynchus* flying by. Good numbers of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were foraging in the wet grass along with some Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*. Call was heard of Thick-billed Warbler *Iduna aedon*. In the lake and small ponds close by there were ducks; Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Garganey *Spatula querquedula*, Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca* and Indian Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*. On a tree near the lake, there was a flock of Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans* perched.

Everyone dispersed, some went to the lakes, others to the forest patch, some stayed near the tree to look for raptors. While going towards the forest patch, there were six Indian Coursers *Cursorius coromandelicus* in an open field.

ICRISAT Trip Report

They seemed bold, cautiously running away and still seemed curious to the onlookers. A juvenile Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* briefly sat on the ground and then flew graciously, scanning the ground. There was a sighting of Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* too. The landscape was ideal for raptors, the open fields and undisturbed patches suit them well. We decided to take a look at the lake where there is a breeding colony of Herons, Egrets, Cormorants and Pelicans. We saw an Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* perched on an iron framework. Near it was a juvenile Shikra *Accipiter badius* keeping an eye on our moves.



A sizeable flock of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* flew overhead as we heard the cacophony of the breeding colony. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*, Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Gray Herons *Ardea cinerea* and Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* were stationed there to raise their brood. It was a good sight of mixed breeding community of birds. Eurasian Marsh-Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* gave excellent viewing opportunities. They were seen in pair, one of them alighting on a perch and the other going round that tree as if figuring where to come down.

It was a sight to see more than ten Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* whirling in the high sky looking like some bird of prey. We don't see frequently such numbers at a place.



In a flooded paddy field there were good numbers of waders seen; Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Ruff *Calidris pugnax*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. There were good numbers of Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* too, on wires, ready to scoop down to catch a prey.

We saw an old building and decided to check it for Owls. After reaching there, we heard calls of Common Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius* and a big flock of feral Rock Pigeons *Columba livia* occupying the structure. The building was called Manmool Castle, Constructed by the Qutub Shahis in the 16th century, the structure was used as a fort, a taxation centre, a hunting lodge, a shelter for poor people and eventually as a shed for cattle. The people of Manmool village used it as an administrative building.

ICRISAT Trip Report

Returning back, on either side of road, there were trees planted and we heard calls of Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae* from there. Exploring the area gave us Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, Indian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo* and Indian Gray Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris*. On a powerline there were hundreds of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* flying and returning to the cable in a crowded group. Two Wire-tailed Swallows *Hirundo smithii* flew on a stream and went in the darkness under the bridge in such confidence that it amazed us to see them dive.

Raptors were plenty, White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa*, Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*, Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* and Indian Spotted Eagle *Clanga hastata* were spotted.

We wrapped up the bird walk till 11 AM, a total of 149 species were reported.



Eurasian Marsh Harrier
Circus aeruginosus
By Karunakanth Bathula



Shikra *Accipiter badius*
By Satyanarayana Samala

Satyam©



Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*
By Avinash Subramanya

Narsapur Forest Trip Report

By RK Balaji

177th Birdwalk at Narsapur Forest
Sunday, 12th November, 2017

The Narsapur forest is 45 kms from Hyderabad in the Medak district. This is spread between Gummadidala and Narsapur town. This forest spans over 30 km² and has a ghat section, thick forest, a hill, a large lake, a good number of birds, varied flora and fauna. Lately, this has become a hotspot for bird watching.

We had planned to start off at Air Force Academy, 3km before Narsapur. After arrival of all the participants, we began our journey towards Narsapur. When we reached our usual hotspot location, the activity was pretty good which was not expected by anyone. We formed small groups and did birding on different trails.

The ample tree cover bordering the small pond was a good habitat for Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*, Jerdon's Leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*, Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*, Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*, Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*, and many more. Here especially we sighted Large cuckooshrike *Coracina macei* (male & female together), Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae* and Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*. After this, we moved on to our trail towards main lake. On a bamboo tree, parallel to our way, we observed Ashy Woodswallows *Artamus fuscus*, Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*, White-browed bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Grey-bellied cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*.

Two Short-toed snake Eagles *Circaetus gallicus* were sighted hovering above us.

In the Lake area, Grey-bellied cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus* (hepatic morph) was perched with kill on a thorn tree beside us. Western marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus* flew above across our path. Common hoopoe was taking mud bath near the shore and Red avadavats *Amandava amandava* perched on a small trees. Then I observed Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Greater painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* at the lakeside which were little far from us.

Here we enjoyed good views of Lesser Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna javanica*, Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*, Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* and Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica*, Common and Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, River Tern *Sterna aurantia*, White-throated/Common Kingfishers, Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*, Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* and Shrikes.

A total of 118 species were reported at the end of the bird walk.



Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
by Soumyajit Basu



Black Headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera*
By Phani Krishna Ravi



© Subrata Kool'17

Grey-bellied cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*
By Subrata Kool

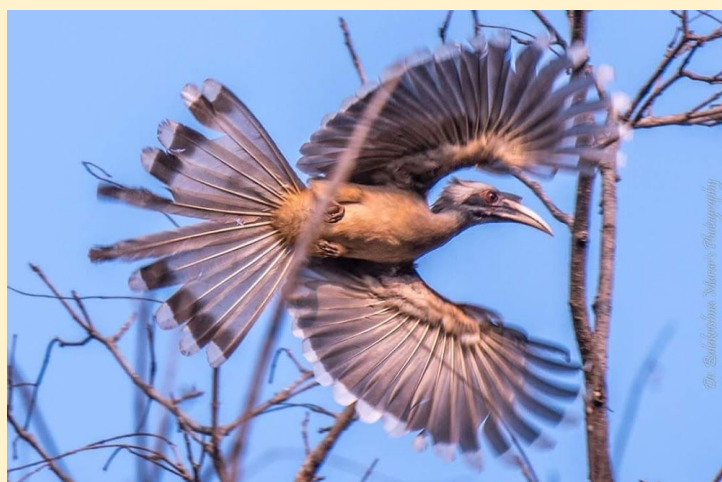
Ananthagiri Hills Trip Report

By Harish Kotari

178th Bird Walk at Ananthagiri Hills
Sunday, 19th November 2017

Riding on the resurgence of lush green forest in areas around Vikarabad, about 70 km from the city, and the resultant visible growth in animal and bird population there, the forest department has decided to aid people who wish to enter the forest belt for a feel of the wildlife.

Vikarabad forest range that forms part of the Hyderabad division has two major reserve forest blocks-Damagundam and Ananthagiri, each spread over around 10 km². While the limits of Damagundam begin from Manneguda, about 60 kms from Hyderabad, Ananthagiri block begins where the limits of Vikarabad ends near the railway tracks.



Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris*
By Balakrishna Marar

The bird walk started at 7 AM by forming two groups from the temple premises. Our team consist of Me (Harish Kotari, Manoj Kumar Vittapu, Soumyajit Basu & Praveen). The welcome came from the Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* in 5 numbers sitting on a dry tree branch.

We started searching for the Brown Fish Owl *Bubo zeylonensis*, which is not seen from many months. Seeing that it can't be seen, we looked further. Later we headed further up into the forest, saw Mottled Wood Owl *Strix ocellata* sitting on an open perch, it was completely camouflaged with the tree barks. The eyes of this owl look like black pearls, we started clicking pictures.



Mottled Wood Owl *Strix ocellata*
By Harish Kotari

We headed further up into the forest and found White bellied Drongos *Dicrurus caeruleus* in good numbers and Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*. Further ahead towards the grassland we merged with the other group and the whole team searched of raptors. We didn't see anything and we headed back to forest from the grassland.

We heard the drumming of woodpecker and walked slowly towards it, there we found a White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus*, busy pecking on a tree branch. Clicked few pics and moved on.

Ananthagiri Hills Trip Report

Moving forward, we reached a spot where we found Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*, Asian paradise Flycatchers *Terpsiphone paradisi*, Grey-headed canary-flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*, Grey Fantails *Rhipidura albiscapa*, Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis* and many more.



Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*
By Subrata Kool

While returning we stopped at the Brown Fish Owl *Bubo zeylonensis* habitat, this time we saw this Owl and we started clicking the pictures. This was a lifer for so many birders. All were happy to see the Owl after a long period.

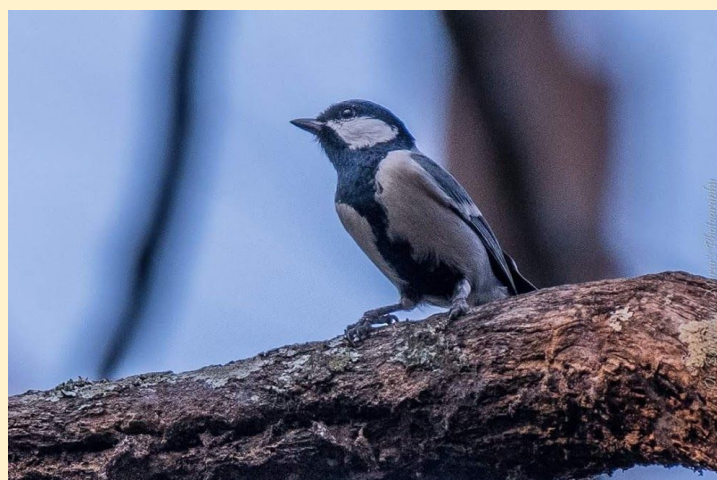
We saw a total of 87 bird species.



Blue capped Rock Thrush
Monticola cinclorhynchus
By Balakrishna Marar



Asian Paradise Flycatcher
Terpsiphone paradisi
By Balakrishna Marar



Cinereous Tit
Parus cinereus
By Balakrishna Marar

Manjeera Dam Trip Report

By Sneha Gupta

179th Bird Walk at Manjeera Dam
Sunday, 26th November 2017

Last weekend I went out birding with a bunch of enthusiastic people from Hyderabad Birding Pals. It was a fun, dedicated day of spotting winter migrants in the beautiful Manjeera Wildlife sanctuary in the Sangareddy district of Telangana. It is an Important Bird Area (IBA) due to its rich bird diversity and has highly cooperative birds for photographs.

We had 11 participants, all diverse people bond together with the interest in birds and love of exploring. The late fall to early spring (September to March) are fantastic for birding. Winter is a great time to see migratory birds, especially the ones those travel in flocks like the waterfowls.

We all kick started the day with a cup of coffee at Allwyn Cross roads, and in no time were ready for some pretty awesome birding session. We started birding with canvassing fields on both the sides. Got plenty of weavers, buntings, munias feeding on the crop, giving the photographers plenty of opportunity for beautiful pictures. After walking a little, we were intrigued by a Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* building a nest.



Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*
By Sundareswaran R

Hundreds of Glossy Ibis' *Plegadis falcinellus* awaited us streamed by in a line. A Western marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* streaked directly over, also en route the hotspot a red-necked falcon was spotted perched on the power line pole kept us much occupied, photographing. The group wandered across the wet patch and out to the adjoining scrub forest land. With the combined eyes and ears of the team we tallied total of a record setting 126 species. We covered the same area in different directions. While we were waiting for the others to join in for the group picture, we saw a warbler in the thickets. The restless hops made it difficult to ID, but the disyllabic call gave the id away as Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*.



Tricolored Munia
Lonchura malacca
By Gyaneshwar Rao

It was a treat to eyes watching the Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*, Black bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* and Black-naped oriole *Oriolus chinensis* after which we decided to wrap up the walk. Birding is a never ending quest and needs frequent knowledge updating to stay in pace. We had a healthy discussion on the birds which were photographed but not identified on the field. What I love about this group is that it has room from beginners and newcomers, guests, photographers, or those who want to geek about it. Basically all. All too soon the field trip was over. Checklists for all the field trips are entered into ebird soon after the end of the trip.



Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*
by Sneha Gupta

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*
By Gyaneshwar Rao



Nandi Hills Trip Report

By Harikrishna Adepu

Birding at Nandi Hills, Karnataka
Saturday, 28th October 2017

Nandi Hills or Nandi betta is an ancient hill fortress in southern India, in the Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka state. It is 10 kms from Chickballapur town and approximately 60 kms from the city of Bengaluru. The hills are nestled near the town of Nandi. In traditional belief, the hills are the origin of the Arkavathy river. Apart from being a major tourist attraction, Nandi Hills also offers a variety of avifauna for the bird lovers.

We have reached Nandi Hills at 7AM on 28th October. It was a pleasant morning, and the place was quite crowded. We started our birding from the nursery area. There was quite a lot of activity and we were hearing the calls all the way, but it was difficult to spot the birds, may be because of the crowd there at the place. In a hope to spot the birds, we started climbing up, and, entered a dense area, and, there it was, a Pied Thrush perched on a tree branch. Since there was hardly any light in the area, we could just get some record shots of it. Just ahead of the pied thrush there was a female Blackbird and a family of Grey Junglefowl. After getting some record shots, we proceeded further, we started seeing more species, starting with a greenish warbler, Sunbirds, puff-throated babblers and White-cheeked Barbets.



After spending a couple of hours, we headed to the other side of the nursery, in a hope to get some lifers and some good pictures. While walking ahead, our eyes fell on the Indian Blue Robin, perched on a branch. It flew the moment we saw it, and we just waited there hoping it would come back. After a few minutes, here it is, back in the same location, but on beautiful perch, in good lighting, providing a beautiful frame for photography. After spending some good time clicking it, we decided to call it a day. Overall, we had a decent birding experience, with about 50+ species recorded in spite of a heavy crowd.





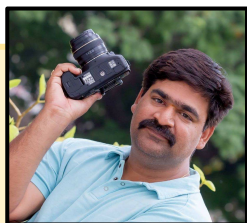
Puff-throated babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*
By Harikrishna Adepu



Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
By Harikrishna Adepu

What's in my camera bag?

By Ashwin Kadiyala



Nature photography is when I truly get to tell my story, my passion, and my loves. My wife keeps telling me that I connect better with animals than people; I can't tell if this is a problem or a superpower.

I work for a telecom company, which keeps me under lot of stress with work hours for almost 14 Hrs. in a day, with 6 days working. The only way I unwind from this mental pressure is being close to nature, watching birds & animals in their natural habitats. My nature work strives to remind people of the vast beauty in this amazing world. I want to get people outside to experience the world and the critters with whom we share this amazing planet. By Photographing animals in a more emotional manner I hope to get people connected with wildlife.

Most of my photos are sold through agencies or as stock photos. There are several books / websites published with my work. Unfortunately, all the awards, publicity and thousands of monthly views does not mean there is a lot of money coming in. therefore is my entire equipment low budget.

I captured many award winning photos with my Canon 7D / Canon 7D Mk2. I don't want to get into a debate whether canon or Nikon is better. Both are the same as per my opinion, it's all about your skill. You are the person who is creating the magic, not the camera or brand!

My thirst for wildlife (especially birds) started when someone mentioned Mr. Rahul Rallan and asked to check his Flickr account. I was amazed to see the beautiful images, immediately I decided that this is where my heart is and bought myself a **Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 lens**. It was wonderful to come closer to the birds & animals. This lens had sharpness problems on the 500mm end, so I never shot photos over 450mm. I'm more comfortable shooting picture handheld, this will ensure you don't miss the moment or birds in flight. This lens was quite heavy, which made me to upgrade to Canon 400mm f/5.6 prime lens.

Canon 400mm f/5.6 is an amazing lens, lightweight and suited all my requirements. Since it's a prime lens with great sharpness and quick focus, till today lot of photographers vouch of this lens including me. But having a prime lens has its own challenges as it's a fixed focus lens. Sometimes you realise that you are too close and you may miss out some of the awesome shots.



Canon 400mm f/5.6

What's in my camera bag?

My Current gear

Nikon D500: My main squeeze. Once I put this camera in my hands I knew it was going to be the perfect tool for capturing life. I love how fast, sharp, consistent and reliable it is. Ever since I bought this camera I haven't gone to shoot without it.

The pop out back display is awesome for shooting at hard to reach angles because you don't have to look through the eyepiece.

It is perfect for eye level shots. Also the ability to control it with smartphone comes handy when I want to put the camera in unique locations. Sometimes wildlife will get a lot closer to camera when a person is farther away, so that feature rocks!

Nikon 200-500mm f/5.6: Bird photography is always about timing and reach ... whatever lens you have, still the extra reach is the wish of wildlifers. This lens is crazy sharp at 500mm making it perfect for photographing. With 200mm to 500mm you can actually cover most of what you want to click.

Gopro Hero 4: This is a tiny miracle, rugged, waterproof. This is a must wherever I go. It give a wide 170 degree perspective to quickly capture videos / pictures. This can be controlled over a smartphone.

Sirui W-2204 waterproof carbon fiber tripod: This is a very good tripod, lightweight with sturdy legs. This can fall flat with all legs tiltable to 90 degrees, giving an eye level shots.

Nest 530 HII carbon fiber Gimbal: suitable for large tele lens, with good hold and easy to operate. It's quite convenient actually.

Toehold & Wild Roar beanbags: This is a must for all photographers in wild. Not always you carry the tripod, and trust me it's very uncomfortable and painful to carry all the equipment on shoulders. Bean bag offers you go good sturdy base to keep it anywhere and shoot without damaging your expensive equipment. I use it very often and it's my trusted buddy.

Lowepro Prorunner AW450 camera bag: All that you need to fit in your camera bodies, lens, laptop etc. very well built quality and accommodates almost everything you have with good space.

Camping Tripod: Small foldable chair to sit and relax while you wait for the birds to arrive

Camouflage umbrella: Protect yourself from Sun / Rain without detection. Sometimes it works as a hide to go closer to birds.



Nikon D500



Nikon 200-500mm f/5.6

Photographs by Ashwin Kadiyala



Ashwin Kadiyala

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*

A Game of....



Spot-billed pelican Pelecanus philippensis
by Ashwin Kadiyala

... Aggression



Spot-billed pelican Pelecanus philippensis
by Ashwin Kadiyala



Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus roseus
by Ashwin Kadiyala

Harriers of India

By Anand Kalinadhabhatla

For most of us, Harriers fall into the slightly unknown category of birds of prey-lacking the glamour or record-breaking limelight of a Peregrine Falcon, not as showy as the Eagles and without the mystique or curious profile of the Owls. So how does a bird with such a seemingly small fan base lend its name to one of the most iconic fighter jets in history- Harrier Jump Jet. To explore the world of Harriers, we need to travel to the grasslands, reeds in wetlands and marshes of India.

Habitat:

Their preferred habitat is wetlands, grasslands, crop fields, reeds, marshes and dry barren lands. India is the largest wintering ground for these vital indicators of an ecosystem, health of grass and wetlands.

Characteristic facts:

Harriers have a slender build, long-legged, long-winged and long-tailed shape.

They have small beaks, and their face feathers are arranged in facial discs.

Harriers are the only raptors nesting and roosting on the ground.

They nest in marshes or in tall grass and lay four to six dull whitish or bluish eggs.

Harriers exhibit polygyny, males may raise several broods at the same time.

They scan the ground and marshes, flying low to detect prey.

Aerial food transfer is a typical behavior observed in raptors including harriers where a male passes food to a female mid-air and this behaviour is commonly seen during nestling phases as a demand of the female.

Communal roosting is one of the typical behaviours of harriers. Several species of Harriers roost together.

Harriers are leapfrog migrants, with individuals from northern breeding populations wintering farther south than individuals from southern breeding populations. They usually migrate alone and during daytime, hunting as they go.

Harriers exhibit great deal of sexual dimorphism. Juveniles look much like females. Females are usually larger than males.

Harriers have acute sense of hearing. Unlike other hawks, harriers rely heavily on sound as well as vision to detect prey, aided by the facial disc which, as in owls, is thought to help with the location of faint sounds, allowing the harrier to detect prey concealed in vegetation



Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
By Satyesh Naik

Harriers of India

Food:

Harriers feed on Insects, rodents, frogs, snakes, small birds among others



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* with Grasshopper kill
By Ashwin Kadiyala

Distribution:

Of the 16 Harrier species in the world, 6 migrate to India every year in winter. These are,

Western Marsh Harrier *C. Aeruginosus*

Eastern Marsh Harrier *C. Spilonotus*

Hen Harrier *C. Cyaneus*

Pallid Harrier *C. Macrourus*

Pied Harrier *C. melanoleucos*

Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*

Harriers are widespread winter migrants to India, generally beginning to arrive by end of July and remain in the country until April. Montagu's, Eurasian Marsh and Pallid Harriers are widely distributed in India while Pied and Eastern Marsh Harriers are confined to the eastern parts of India. Hen Harriers are commonly seen in Northern India and up to Upper Assam in North Eastern India. Pied Harrier breeds in India.

While Harriers are found in all parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, there are two main roosting sites around Hyderabad - ICRISAT (Telangana) and Rollapadu bird sanctuary (Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh). They both provide perfect roosting sites for the Harriers as they both are protected places. Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers occur in good numbers in this region while Eastern Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier and Pied Harrier are uncommon.

Several species of Harriers roost together. These communal roosting sites are usually tall grasslands. Tall grass obscures visibility to predators provides protection from wind and cold. Harriers usually assemble at these sites prior to sunset. They spend some time in open ground close to their roost site, resting, preening and calling. After sunset, the assembled birds carry out a survey of the roosting site for possible threats before settling for the evening.

The major communal roost sites in India are Velavadar National Park (Gujarat, known as the world's largest Harrier roost)

Rollapadu bird Sanctuary (Andhra Pradesh)

ICRISAT (Telangana)

Keoladeo National Park, and Tal Chapper Wildlife Sanctuary (Rajasthan)

Akola, Solapur and Mumbai (Maharashtra)

Hasserghatta (Karnataka)

Harriers of India

Identification of Harriers:

Western Marsh Harrier: Marshes, flooded rice fields, lakes and coastal lagoons

This raptor and is commonly seen over marshes, reedbeds, lakes, coastal lagoons, paddy fields, grassy plains.

This is largest of all Harrier species. More heavily built than others of the genus, with broader and less pointed wings. Males have black wingtips, grey wings and tail and brown wings and body. Females and juveniles are brown with white or yellowish head. Females are heavier and have broad pale shoulder patches. These patches can be seen while the bird is in flight. White crescent marks at primary bases in the underwings of juveniles which are visible from a distance help in distinguishing juveniles from females in flight.



Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
By Abhishek Ravindra

Eastern Marsh Harrier: Marshes, wet paddy fields and grasslands.

Commonly sighted in East Indian regions (mainly Assam, Manipur, West Bengal) over marshes, wet paddy fields and grass fields.

This bird is a lot similar to Eurasian Marsh harrier in size and habits. Male has blackish or streaked head, and black mantle. White throat and heavily streaked with black breast, belly and underwings are white. Wings and tail grey with black wingtips. Larger than Pied Harrier with broader wings like Eurasian Marsh Harrier. Females have white upper-tail coverts, dark-barred greyish flight feathers and tail, cream head and breast with dark streaks and diffuse streaks on underparts. Heavily streaked with dark brown on nape and lower throat and otherwise similar to female Eurasian Marsh Harrier. Juvenile rather dark with pale-breast band and pale patch at base of underside of primaries. Head usually cream with dark streaks.



Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*
By Ashis Kumar Pradhan

Harriers of India

Hen Harrier: High elevations, marshes and cultivated landscapes

Generally seen at higher elevations, seen in open undulating plains and cultivated country, in plains and hills of Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim Himalayas.

Wings are broad like Eurasian Marsh Harrier. Broad white rump is quite prominent. Males are blue grey in colour with black wing tips. Underparts white with black band along trailing edge. Females and juveniles brownish with barred tails. Faint pale facial collar is present but lacks dark cheek patch of Pallid and Montagu's Harrier. Juveniles similar to adult females but completely light cinnamon to cinnamon-coloured below, and streaked on the breast and belly unlike Pallid and Montagu's Harriers.



Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*
By Rajdeep Mitra

Pallid Harrier: Undulating country, grassy hill sides, cultivation and semi-deserts.

Widespread but uncommon Harrier in India, usually seen in undulating country, scrubs, grassy hill sides, cultivation, and semi-desert.

Males have light grey upper-parts and white grey under-parts except with contrasting black wedge on wing tips and little dark grey hood. Females are brown. The best identification character is the pale collar around the neck of female and juvenile Pallid Harrier which is absent in Montagu's and Hen Harrier. Broad dark brown cheek patch prominent. Upper breast heavily dark brown streaked than pale lower breast. Dark secondaries and paler primaries. Primaries are irregularly barred. Dark secondaries usually show one or two pale bands, which narrow down towards body. Juveniles very similar to the adult females except in the breast, belly and under coverts, which are unstreaked.



Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
By Satyesh Naik

Harriers of India

Pied Harrier: Rice fields, marshes and grasslands

Commonly sighted in East Indian regions (Manipur, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa) over grass fields, rice fields and margins of marshes.

Small wide winged agile bird ranging between 41-46.5 cm. Males are black and white birds while females and juveniles are brown birds. Males glossy black and white bird with head, mantle, throat and breast black and rest of underparts and rump white and tail grey. Females and juveniles are brown birds with white rump patch and barred tails. Females dark brown with grey cast on upper wings, pale below with white belly, tail dark barred greyish and with blunter and less pointed wings as in Hen Harrier. Both females and juveniles have no white on the head and thus can be distinguished from the Eurasian Marsh Harrier. Juveniles with no grey in wings like females and rufous brown underbody and dark under wing with pale patch of primaries. Female have white on the nape like the Eastern Marsh Harrier.



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
By Phani Krishna Ravi



Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*
By Praveen Parvani

Montagu's Harrier: Grassy plains, cultivation and swamps. It is a common Harrier species usually seen in open country, plains and foothills in grasslands and edges of marshes.

Smallest of all Harriers. Long, narrow and pointed wings unlike other harriers. Slow wing beats like Tern. In a perched Montagu's Harrier wing tips reach tail tip unlike other Harriers. Rump is pale grey not as white as in others. Have much white around eye than other ringtails. Males are dark ash-grey with black wing tips and black band across wings (secondaries). Possess rusty streaks on white belly and flanks. The juveniles and Females can be confused with juveniles and females of Hen and Pallid Harriers. Usually the Montagu's Harriers appear more slender in flight. Female and Juveniles brown with barred tails and fainter pale collar around neck but amount of white around eye is distinctive than other Harriers. Except dark crescent on ear-coverts of female Hen Harrier, the Montagu's female closely resembles it.

Harriers of India

Females are brown above and buffish streaked brown below. Dark secondaries possess two prominent pale bands extending up to the body unlike other ringtail females.

Juveniles resemble females but differ by having unstreaked copper brown underbody and underwings.



Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
By Karunakanth Bathula



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* scanning the ground
by Sundareswaran R V



Pied Harrier Juvenile *Circus melanoleucos*
by Harish Reddy



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
by Naresh Vadrevu

Cloud Backup for Wildlife Photographers

By Phani Krishna Ravi

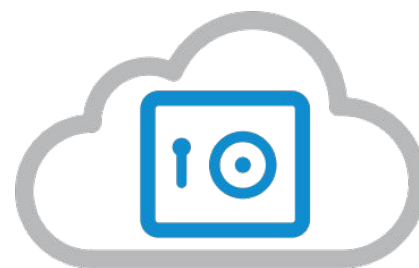
During the past few years, I have come across a lot of professional and amateur photographers who are the victims of losing data on their external HDD in some cases retrieval costs a bomb of 60k rupees to retrieve 2TB HDD, though for most of the wildlife photographers the RAW files are priceless in few cases data is unable to retrieve. It is good to have local backup solutions but sometimes both the local primary and local backup are very vulnerable and can crash anytime due to inconsistency of the hardware design and the usage pattern by most of us, the local backup costs as much as your primary in most of the cases as most of us don't maintain Hierarchical storage for Primary and Backup. Considering all the above the cloud backup is very reliable and it costs as low as your 1TB external HDD or sometimes less.

In the recent years the broadband connectivity in India has improved a lot with almost unlimited uploads and downloads this has given a scope or option to backup all the Digital content like RAW photos, Videos, Field reports, Audio recording etc.

It is suggested to use cloud services as a secondary or backup solution only as there are many dependencies like the Internet connectivity, subscription of backup service, working on High data consuming media files etc. It is recommended to always have the primary/main data local on the internal or external HDD and a backup on the cloud. Although the online backup is not as simple as the local backup as it takes few days/weeks to backup/retrieve 1TB of RAW files with a decent broadband connectivity.

Recently I have come across a cloud backup solution www.backblaze.com which is cost effective and has an automated solution to backup the entire or few folders in a system as selected by the user. The basic Unlimited Plan starts at 50\$ around 3300 rupees per year for one system. By investing 3300 rupees one can backup their entire operating system files in computer and also all your RAW Photographs, I did backup my 3TB complete RAW and few JPG files which I captured since last 10 years in 2 weeks and the Backblaze app which is installed in my iMac will auto backup the selected HDD and folders whenever a new file is added after the first Backup.

The Basic Unlimited license will work only for one Node or Computer and all the Media connected to it, which means you can backup all your internal/external storage devices which are mounted on the single system you have a license for except Ethernet connected NAS or other Network storage devices. You can always retrieve data selectively by choosing the particular folder from a particular Hard Disk which you backed up on Backblaze. Considering the same price for next 10 years for the Unlimited Backup plan, 33k rupees is a valuable investment compared with the amount of time and money one spent to capture all the content in those years.



Cloud Backup for Wildlife Photographers

The restore is pretty simple and unlimited, just select all the files/folders you want to restore and it will give the link to the downloadable zip file which contains all the selected folders. Unlike other cloud storage apps/solution which relies on 3rd party data centres or does not offer a flat fee for unlimited backup/restore, Backblaze has their own data center with the customised Data Storage Pod and offers Unlimited Backup/Restore. There is also a Mobile app that you can use to access your files on the go.

In the end, I suggest all the readers compare other available options mentioned below and promote cloud backup to all the wildlife photographers.

Unlimited Cloud Backup

Backblaze - <https://www.backblaze.com>

Carbonite - <https://www.carbonite.com>

Livedrive - <https://www.livedrive.com>

Opendrive - <https://www.opendrive.com>

Other Cloud Storage solutions

Google drive - drive.google.com

Dropbox - [Dropbox.com](https://dropbox.com)

Microsoft Onedrive - onedrive.live.com

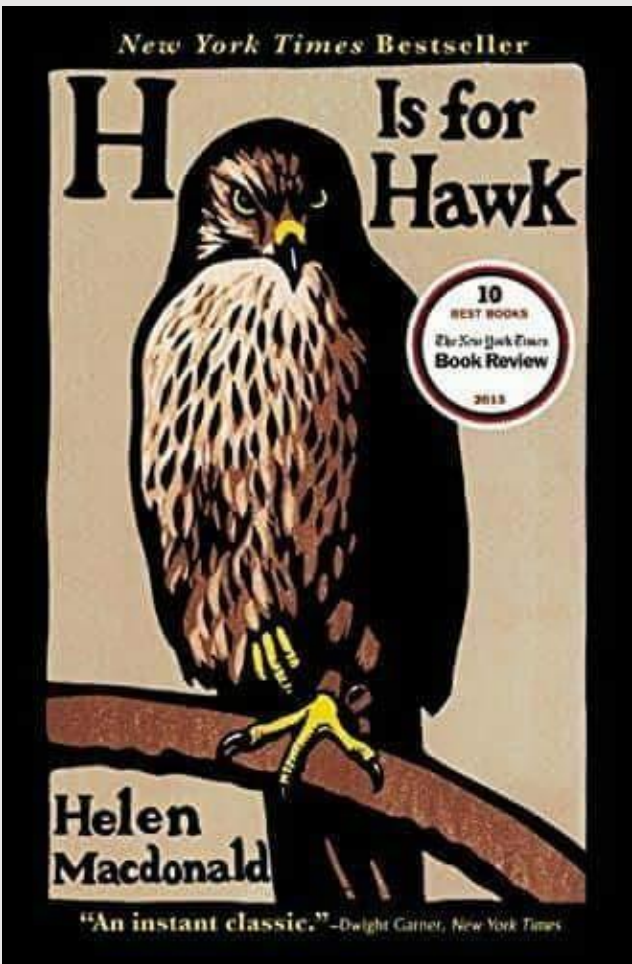
Happy Clicking



Book Review

By Rohith Nareddy

'H is for Hawk' is the tale of the author's relationship with a goshawk, which has a reputation for being dangerous and temperamental. The journey begins when the author, a historian by profession and one who has dealt with falcons since her teens, begins to train the goshawk soon after the death of her father. "I grabbed the hood from the box and turned to the hawk. Her beak was open, her hackles raised; her wild eyes were the colour of sun on white paper, and they stared because the whole world had fallen into them at once."

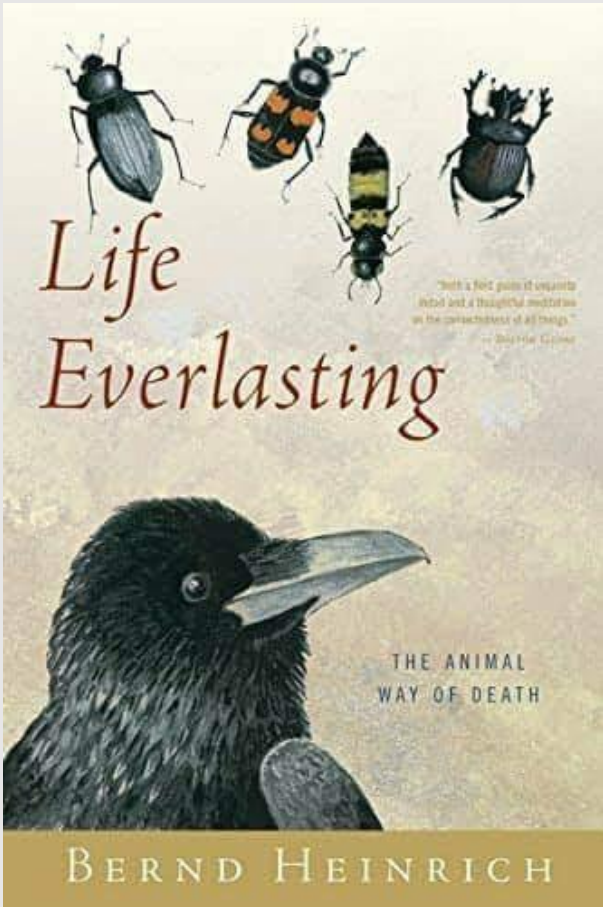


A detailed account of her trials and tribulations to understand and win the confidence of the hawk and reads like a emotional roller-coaster through the frustration and breakthroughs. Rich and accurate in detail about the biology of the bird, this book has been an international bestseller acclaimed by many as one of the best books in the recent decade.



Book Review

By Rohith Nareddy



The most any birder encounters a dead bird is when some unfortunate bird gets entangled in manja in a tree or still an ultra rare case when a bird gets electrocuted and hangs by a claw for what seems to be a long time. But there are many more situations of bird death when in an open field or under a tree we find evidence in the form of a clump of feathers and bones of it being a meal to some bigger raptor. 'Life Everlasting: The Animal Way of Death' by Bernd Heinrich deals with how in the natural world all living things from the smallest insect to the largest mammal return to nature after death giving a detailed account of the processes in various ecosystems.

In the opening of the book he says "I do believe, however, that many readers are willing to examine taboos and to bring this topic into the open as something relevant to our own species". A fascinating account of the various ways life thrives and ends, though only temporarily in the grand scheme this book gives an insights into the way an ecosystem works.



Important Sightings



Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl *Bubo nipalensis*
Amarabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana
Abhishek Ravindra

Important Sightings



Merlin *Falco columbarius*
Little Rann of Kutch, Gujarat
Harish Patlolla

Important Sightings



Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis*
Sattal, Uttarakhand
Soumyajit Basu

Important Sightings



Yellow-legged Buttonquail *Turnix tanki*
Amarabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana
Abhishek Ravindra

Important Sightings



Tickell's leaf warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*
Ananthagiri Hills, Telangana
Amarendra Konda

Photographer's Corner



Indian Skimmers *Rynchops albicollis*
Satkosia, Odisha
Suresh Kumar Mishra

Photographer's Corner



Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
Jerdon's leafbird *Chloropsis jerdoni*
Bangaluru, Karnataka
Binu Nair

Photographer's Corner

Harish Patlolla
PHOTOGRAPHY



Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Little Rann of Kutch, Gujarat
Harish Patlolla

Photographer's Corner



Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*
ICRISAT, Hyderabad
Satyanarayana Samala

Photographer's Corner

Naresh Vadrevu



Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*
Sattal, Uttarakhand
Naresh Vadrevu

Photographer's Corner



MANJOY LOUREMBAM
PHOTOGRAPHY

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris*
Ananthagiri Hills, Telangana
Manjoy Lourembam

Photographer's Corner



Shikra *Accipiter badius*
Hyderabad
Siddharth Kallam

Photographer's Corner



Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
Bikaner, Rajasthan
Naresh Vadrevu

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Cover photograph by Satyesh Naik
Montagu's Harrier



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